

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior version, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-9 (CANCELLED)

10. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method for manufacturing semiconductor granules intended to feed a semiconductor material manufacturing melt, said method comprising a step of sintering powders of at least one material selected from the group consisting of silicon, germanium, gallium arsenide, and the alloys thereof so as to form said granules, said sintering step comprising the steps of ~~[[by]]~~ compacting and thermal processing said powders ~~of powders of at least one material belonging to the group formed by silicon, germanium, gallium arsenide, and the alloys thereof.~~

11. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 10, wherein the granules have a size greater than 1 mm.

12. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method of claim 10, wherein the powders comprise powders of at least one of nanometric ~~and/or~~ and micrometric ~~[[size]]~~ sizes.

13. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method of claim 10, ~~further comprising~~ wherein the step of sintering comprises a compaction step followed with a thermal processing step.

14. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method of claim 13, wherein the pressure of the compaction step ranges between 10 MPa and 1 GPa ~~and the temperature is greater than 800°C.~~

15. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method of claim 10, ~~further comprising~~ wherein said compacting and thermal processing steps are performed at the same time defining a hot pressing step.

16. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 15, wherein, in the hot pressing step, the pressure is lower than 100 MPa and the temperature is greater than 800°C.

17. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 10, further comprising a step of placing the powders in a mould.

18. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 10, wherein the powders are doped semiconductor powders.

19. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The method of claim 10, further comprising a step of annealing or doping of the granules.

20. (NEW) The method of Claim 10, wherein said granules have a diameter/thickness ratio in the range of about 1 to 1.66.

21. (NEW) The method of Claim 10, wherein said granules have a porosity ranging between about 20 % and about 40 %.

22. (NEW) The method of Claim 10, wherein said granules are cylindrical in shape.

23. (NEW) The method of Claim 10, wherein said granules have a shape selected from the group consisting of cubes, rectangle parallelepipeds and elongated.

24. (NEW) The method of Claim 17, wherein said mould comprises a plate having a plurality of openings.

25. (NEW) The method of Claim 24, wherein said openings have a diameter in the range of about 1 to 5 millimeters.

26. (NEW) The method of Claim 24, wherein said plate has a thickness in the range of about 1 mm to 3 mm.

27. (NEW) The method of Claim 11, wherein said granules have a diameter in the range of about 1 mm to 5 mm.

28. (NEW) The method of Claim 11, wherein said granules have a thickness in the range of about 1 mm to 3 mm.

29. (NEW) The method of Claim 12, wherein said powders are sized in the range of about 10 nm to 500 nm.

30. (NEW) The method of Claim 12, wherein said powders are sized in the range of about 10 μm to 500 μm .

31. (NEW) The method of claim 13, wherein the temperature is greater than 800°C.

32. (NEW) A method comprising the steps of:

sintering powders of at least one material selected from the group consisting of silicon, germanium, gallium arsenide, and the alloys thereof so as to form granules, said sintering step comprising the steps of compacting and thermal processing said powders; and

feeding said granules to a melt to produce ingots.

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33. (NEW) The method of Claim 32, wherein said granules have a diameter in the range of about 1 mm to 5 mm and a thickness in the range of about 1 mm to 3 mm.